

**Each year instructors prepare their students for regional and state skills competitions by holding or attending preliminary contests. Three KY Tech ATC welding instructors (Glendon Harris, Clark Co.; Joe Pawley, Harrison Co.; and Chris King, Hughes Jones-Harrodsburg) accepted an invitation from Franklin Co. Career and Technical Center (FCCTC) Welding Instructor Randy Shewmaker to bring five of their best welding students to Frankfort for a welding contest. Southside Technical Center welding students, under the direction of Jim Lamirande, were also invited to take part in the competition.**

**“In my view, it’s important to provide students with more exposure to the types of students they will be competing against at the regional and state SkillsUSA competitions,” says Shewmaker. “It also affords them an opportunity to meet business and industry experts who take the time to judge the competition. “**

## **Hughes Jones Harrodsburg ATC Welding Student Takes Top Honors at Franklin Co. CTC Competition**



Photo (l to r): Franklin Co. CTC Welding Instructor Randy Shewmaker, Lincoln Electric Technical Representative Ed Varekojis and Hughes Jones Harrodsburg ATC Welding Student Travis Proctor. Proctor won first out of 25 students and received a welding helmet and Lincoln Electric duffel bag.



Photo: HJH ATC Welding Instructor Chris King (center) is shown with two of his students, Haley Hooper and 1<sup>st</sup> place winner Travis Proctor.

**“For me, welding began as a hobby. Then, Mr. K helped me realize that the hand-eye coordination required to be a good welder would benefit me in my future plans to become a skilled surgeon,” says Haley Hooper, a senior and second year welding student at the HJH ATC. “He has been a major influence in my life because he has taught me a lot about welding and life skills in general. Mr. K showed me how to dominate a man’s world because he taught me to be strong. I’m now the president of our local SkillsUSA chapter.”**

**“These competitions are important to challenge students in a controlled environment to prepare them for the pressures they will face when they enter the workforce,” says Hughes Jones Harrodsburg ATC Welding Instructor Chris King. “Preparing for these competitions provides a better learning environment. The students are more focused because they know they are going to be held accountable. That’s what it’s all about. We provide the necessary technical education and skills training to lay the foundation for a viable workforce – one where quality skills and a good work ethic mean something.”**

**“I’m from a family of welders and it is in my blood. So, I wanted to take welding. Mr. King has taught me what it takes to master the skill and how to manipulate my work to produce excellent fabricated parts,” says Travis Proctor, a senior and second year welding student at the HJH ATC. “It takes an excellent teacher to have an excellent student and Mr. King, in my opinion, is the Teacher of the Year.”**

The welding competition is a way to give students “braggin’ rights,” and it also helps them understand how marketable they can be in the work world with sharpened skills and a sound education, since, *welders are in high demand across the nation*. And, it takes the support of business and industry professionals to judge the competition.

“In my opinion, it’s important for business and industry personnel to be involved in the future growth of our workforce. We must serve as role models in helping students understand the importance of quality skills training and the type of career development these classes provide for them to succeed in the real world,” says Fred Anderson, a welding engineer with ArvinMeritor. “It’s important for students to realize that they can start out as a welder and end up as a welding engineer. I did. It can happen by combining the experience of a technical program in high school and then entering a postsecondary institution to obtain an advanced degree. All of this leads to having a career where an individual can comfortably support his or her family. Realistically, you cannot separate the two – it’s imperative to have the required hands-on skills and education.”



**Photo (l to r): Lincoln Electric Technical Representative Ed Varekojis and ArvinMeritor Welding Engineer Fred Anderson judge the welds of 25 students.**

“In the state of Kentucky, there are hundreds of companies involved in the welding industry. For this to continue to prosper, we need to target today’s youth because there is a serious shortage of skilled arc welders in KY and all over the U.S. Because of the shortage, wages for skilled welders continue to increase. Competitive events like this help to create the interest while at the same time sharpening the skills of students who participate,” says Varekojis. “On behalf of Lincoln Electric, we were happy to be able to provide technical knowledge and material resources to support this effort.”





Shewmaker is shown with Clark Co. ATC Welding Students Kayla Fryer and John Griffett. Both tied for 2<sup>nd</sup> place and are the students of Instructor Glendon Harris.

**“I can’t believe we tied, but it’s great to place this well,” says Kayla Fryer, a second year welding student. “I want to be a stick welder. My plan when I graduate is to go onto Bluegrass Technical College to get an associate’s degree in welding. Mr. Harris is an awesome teacher because we learn something new every day. If we need help, he’s there. He is not only knowledgeable, but, we are all comfortable around him because his is friendly and nice.”**

**At right: Kayla peruses a Lincoln Electric poster.**



**“To say the least, I was extremely proud of the performance of my students at the competition. The kids who participated in the competition are all hard workers and I believe they saw their hard work paying off. I have a lot of faith in this group of kids. To me, there is nothing like seeing your students accomplishing a task and being proud of what they have done,” says Clark Co. ATC Welding Instructor Glendon Harris. “I would also like to thank Randy Shewmaker for putting on and inviting us to the competition. It was a great development opportunity for the kids!”**



Above: Far right, Glendon Harris (Clark Co.). Far left Chris King (HJH ATC). All men are comparing the welds students created during competition.

**“These tournaments are a great way to demonstrate a very similar atmosphere that the young welders will experience when applying for a welding position in industry. I feel that regardless of the outcome of the tournament, the fact that they were able to travel, compete, and meet different people like themselves was beneficial enough to start down the road of a very successful welding career,” says Harrison Co. ATC Instructor Joe Pawley. “I would like to thank Mr. Shewmaker for inviting us and wish everyone good luck this year at the regional competition in Lexington.”**



Photo above: Harrison Co. ATC Welding Instructor Joe Pawley takes a moment to go over some information with one of his students, Cassie Mullins.

**“I’m used to being the only one or one of the few females in a male dominated career field or sport where a preset expectation for female performance exists. In my view, this expectation is not always positive. So, quite frankly, I’ve enjoyed proving everyone wrong and this year, it happens to be welding,” says Cassie Mullins, a senior Harrison Co. ATC welding student. “When I graduate, I plan to go into mechanical engineering. This welding class is going to be helpful to me in my future career because of the skills I’m learning.”**



Harrison Co. ATC Welding Student Kevin Curtis is shown accepting a pair of welding gloves from Shewmaker for placing 5<sup>th</sup> in the overall competition.



Each instructor was adamant in his thinking that this competition provided their students with another opportunity to excel and Southside Technical School Welding Instructor Jim Lamirande had this to say about the whole endeavor, "I believe in kids. Our students get to see how other shops are laid out and what types of equipment other students have to work with. They also get to meet their peers and have time to mingle. A lot of learning can take place in this type of situation. This competition is also an opportunity for the teachers to work with other schools. And finally, I'd also like to say that Lincoln Welding has given teachers across the state more technical updates than any other company in the field. We appreciate their efforts."

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**Results of the 2nd Annual Franklin Co. Career and Technical Center Welding Competition are:**

**First Place:** Travis Proctor, KY Tech-Hughes Jones Harrodsburg ATC

**Second Place (Tie):** John Griffett, and Kayla Fryer, KY Tech-Clark Co. ATC

**Fourth Place:** Josh Croucher, FCCTC

**Fifth Place:** Kevin Curtis, KY Tech-Harrison Co. ATC



Josh Croucher, a junior at Franklin Co. HS and third year welding student under the direction of Randy Shewmaker. Croucher placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the competition.